



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



ERIN BROWN NAMED DIRECTOR OF STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

Aaron Pollard, Deputy Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, announced on Monday, October 19, that Erin Brown will serve as the director of the new state veterans cemetery in Sioux Falls. Brown will begin her duties November 9.

Once on board, Brown will be responsible for assisting the Department with the completion of the cemetery. From that point forward, she will oversee the day-to-day operations, while ensuring our heroes and their eligible loved ones who will call this sacred ground their forever home, are honored.

"Erin's record of achievements goes all the way back to her time in the military," said Deputy Secretary Pollard. "Her service to this country did not end there. She has worked as a county veterans service officer, an education specialist, claims examiner, state veterans service officer, and a program manager. All of these roles have augmented Erin's expertise on the benefits, programs, and services available to veterans and their families.



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730TH ASMC CHANGES COMMAND

Maj. Wayne Hintz, of Sioux Falls, took command of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 730th Area Support Medical Company during a change of command ceremony in Vermillion, October 3.

Hintz assumed command from Maj. Eric Eidem, of Rapid City, who had commanded the unit since October 2018. Eidem will now join the Medical Command in Rapid City as a flight surgeon.

As commander, Hintz leads nearly 100 soldiers comprised of medics, doctors, physician assistants, nurses, medical staff and technicians, as well as a platoon of mechanics, communications personnel and culinary members.

"It's an honor to be commander of the 730th, and I appreciate the opportunity to lead this unit," said Hintz. "I'd like to thank Maj. Eidem. I appreciate the way you have left this unit. You have left it in good hands, and my goal is to leave this unit better than I found it. I know there's some challenges we will face, but we will face them together as a family."



Maj. Eric Eidem, (right) outgoing commander of the 730th Area Support Medical Company, sits with incoming commander, Maj. Wayne Hintz, on a bench presented to Eidem for his service to the unit.

Hintz has been a member of the SDARNG for 26 years. He enlisted in 1994 as a combat medic with Headquarters Battery, 2-147th Field Artillery Battalion in Watertown. Hintz received his commission as an officer with the Army Nurse Corp in August 2012. He was assigned to the 730th ASMC as the unit's medical surgical nurse. He later transferred to the Medical Command as a nurse case manager.

In his civilian life, Hintz is employed by South Dakota State University as a professor for the College of Nursing. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from SDSU and his Master of Science in Nursing from National American University.

MESSAGE FROM SDDVA SECRETARY WHITLOCK

October is designated as a month to increase awareness of Agent Orange and the long-term effect it has had, and continues to have, on our veterans.

In addition to brutal combat conditions, U.S. troops in Vietnam faced invisible hazards from the exposure to Agent Orange. Agent Orange was a tactical herbicide the U.S. military used to clear leaves and vegetation for military operations during the Vietnam War.

After the war, the toll of Agent Orange manifested itself in severe skin rashes, cancers, diabetes, birth defects, and numerous other health issues.

In 1991, Congress enacted the Agent Orange Act, giving the United States Department of Veterans Affairs the authority to declare certain conditions “presumptive” to exposure to Agent Orange, making veterans who served in Vietnam eligible to receive treatment and compensation for these conditions. In 2019, Congress enacted the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, extending the presumption of herbicide exposure to veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam.



Over 28,000 South Dakota veterans served during the Vietnam War era and we owe it to them to continue raising awareness about the deadly consequences of its use.

Federal benefits are ever changing and can be very confusing. We encourage all Vietnam Veterans to visit their county or tribal veterans service officers (CTVSO's) and discuss issues relating to Agent Orange. To locate the CTVSO nearest you visit: <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>.

Now, more than ever, we need to continue to deliver on our promise to take care of our veterans. We will keep our sleeves rolled up and work collectively to ensure our veterans have a successful journey after they return home.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

VA CREATES NATIONAL WOMEN VETERANS ONCOLOGY SYSTEM OF EXCELLENCE IN FIGHT AGAINST BREAST CANCER

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is developing a National Women Veterans Oncology System of Excellence through research, partnerships [precision oncology](#) and [teleoncology](#) that will provide women veteran oncology patients with cutting edge care and access to potentially lifesaving clinical trials.

Through the National Women Veterans Oncology System of Excellence and current partnerships with The National Cancer Institute, academic medical centers and others, the VA is uniquely situated to provide care via teleoncology and decentralized clinical trials to women veterans nationwide.

“Each year, an estimated 700 women veterans enrolled in VA health care are diagnosed with breast cancer — calculating to one in eight women diagnosed within their lifetime,” said Acting VA Deputy Secretary Pamela Powers. “VA’s continued work with partnerships, research and innovations are leading to faster cures and better outcomes. Our veterans deserve no less.”

Partnerships with medical and research universities will help advance and expand the VA’s teleoncology and other services to provide the best cancer care and treatment options to women veterans [across the nation](#).

As part of this effort, the VA is seeking to partner with more oncology medical and research organizations and universities that deliver world-class care and research. For information on becoming a VA partner, contact Cancer@VA.Gov.

Click here to [learn more](#) about VA health services for women veterans.

she
wore
these.

It's **our job** to give **her**
the best care anywhere.



WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

 Department of
Veterans Affairs | learn more at
www.womenhealth.va.gov

VETERAN'S TRANSPORTATION

Did you know that River Cities Public Transit, based out of Pierre, accepts Medicaid payment!

What that means is, if you're a veteran on Medicaid, you can now get curb to curb transportation at **NO COST, even if you live in a non-highly rural county.**

This applies for all Medicaid authorized medical appointments anywhere in South Dakota!

What does River Cities Public Transit offer?

- A clean, modern fleet of vehicles for ambulatory and non-ambulatory transit.
- Vehicles are sanitized on a daily basis.
- Professionally trained drivers who are all P.A.S.S. certified by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).
- Fulltime Safety Officer on staff.
- Member Dakota Transit Association (DTA).
- Member Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).

This allows veterans who do not live in counties considered highly rural, but are on Medicaid, to utilize the transit's free transportation services.

For more information on this transportation issue and any questions you might have about the services provided by River Cities Transit, please call Jess Marlow at 605-945-2360.



CARES ACT HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Today, Governor Kristi Noem announced that \$10 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) have been awarded to the South Dakota Housing Development Authority (SDHDA) to assist South Dakotans who have been financially impacted by COVID-19 and need help paying their housing expenses.

"South Dakota is in a good spot as we bounce back from COVID-19, but there is still work to be done," said Governor Noem. "If folks need a lifeline right now, this program can help be that bridge."

The assistance, funded by the State of South Dakota from the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, can provide South Dakotans with up to \$1500 a month. Eligible applicants can earn up to 115 percent AMI but must have a demonstrated financial need and be at risk of losing their housing. Assistance can be provided for past due rent, mortgage and/or utilities and may be used for future housing payments, for the time period of March 1 through Dec. 30, 2020.

Assistance provided is not a loan and does not have to be paid back. Payment is made directly to the landlord, mortgage servicer or utility provider on the applicant's behalf. Households who may have current protections in place such as an eviction moratorium, should inquire about this financial assistance.

For more information and to apply, visit sdcareshousingassistance.com.

CELEBRATING OUR STAFF

October is filled with many opportunities to celebrate the attributes of our team at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.


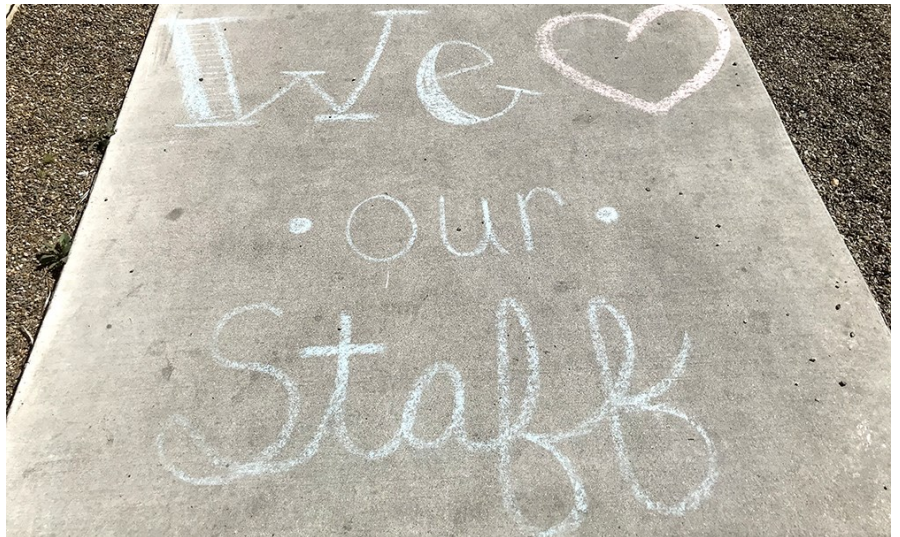
This month is National Physical Therapy Month. A special “shout out” and thank you to Dyna Ferry and Cole Goehring for all their work with the residents!

This week is National Pharmacy Week and Tuesday was National Pharmacy Tech Week. Our thanks to John Lane, Michelle Gross, Holly Weiss and Raven Rush for their professionalism in operating the State Veterans Home pharmacy!

Also, October 18 – 24 is International Infection Prevention Week! SDDVA is fortunate to have Rachelle Butler, RN, Infection Preventionist, on our team. She has led our staff at the Home, through the COVID-19 pandemic. Her leadership, knowledge, and diligence have been a great asset as we maneuver through this challenging time.

Next week is National Health Care Facilities and Engineering Week! SDDVA appreciates our great maintenance and housekeeping squad at the Home. Thanks to Tom Inman, Bob Etzkorn, Chris McClure, Bob Halls, Scott Miller, Joseph Beug, Roger Fischer, Tim Beldin, Mike Hewitt, Curt Wilde, Tyler Rittel, and David Stewart for keeping the facility and grounds maintained and in good order!

Also next week is National Pastoral Care Week! Thank you to Chaplains Morris Nelson and Darwin Kopfmann. They have guided us through times of loss, as well as through this pandemic.



**A TRUE HERO ISN'T
MEASURED BY THE SIZE OF
HIS STRENGTH, BUT BY THE
STRENGTH OF HIS HEART.**

FALL IS IN THE AIR AT THE STATE VETERANS HOME



A big shout out and thank you to the team at Stunningham Farms for delivering over 100 pumpkins and decorating the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home Campus for Fall. Our heroes truly appreciate all of these decorations!



SD ARMY NATIONAL GUARD BATTALION RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

For the second time in three years, the South Dakota National Guard's 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion has received the Gen. Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. Readiness Award for excellence.

The Pierre-based 152nd was announced as the recipient of the Kerwin award for 2019, which recognizes the most outstanding Army National Guard battalion in the nation for achieving the highest standards in training and readiness.

The national award is presented jointly on behalf of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), the Association of the U.S. Army, and the Reserve Officers Association. This is the third straight year a SDNG battalion has received the award (139th Brigade Support Battalion received for 2018).

The 152nd also received the Maj. Gen. Milton A. Reckord Trophy this year, presented by NGAUS, which similarly recognizes the Army National Guard unit with the highest level of readiness in the country. The Kerwin and Reckord awards also reflect the state of readiness of the battalion's subordinate companies.

The 152nd battalion provides multifunctional logistics and support operations for U.S. forces, as well as provides command and control, administrative, logistics and training support of the battalion's four assigned units and detachments located in six communities throughout the state. These units include the 1742nd Transportation Company (Sioux Falls, Flandreau), 740th Transportation Company (Milbank, Aberdeen), 665th Support Maintenance Company (Mitchell), and 730th Area Support Medical Company (Vermillion).

Recipients of the Kerwin award demonstrate excellence in operational planning, execution of training, and maintaining high readiness standards above all other Army National Guard units for the training year. Evaluation criteria for the award include the areas of assigned personnel strength, percentage of personnel qualified in their duty position, attendance at monthly drill weekends and annual training, individual weapons qualification and physical fitness test scores, as well as an effective maintenance program.

The 152nd returned home in June of this year after serving on a successful 11-month deployment in the Middle East supporting U.S. and coalition forces in the region.

The Kerwin award was named for retired Gen. Walter T. Kerwin, Jr., who served as the first commander of United States Forces Command and also as Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army from 1974 to 1978. Kerwin was a strong advocate of the "One Army," or "Total Army" concept that recognized the important role of the National Guard and U. S. Army Reserve. The plans and programs he set in motion resulted in a significant improvement in the readiness of reserve components.

‘We’ve Got Your Six’

1st Annual Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair



Friday, November 6, 2020

2:00 PM—4:00 PM

**Drive-through at the Sturgis Parking Lot between
Lynn’s Dakotamart and the Post Office - 1111 Lazelle St.**

Open to ALL Veterans and their families

Veteran Service Officers from Meade and Lawrence Counties, resources from the Department of Labor, housing, education, counseling, transportation, loans, healthcare, Veteran Readiness and Employment, food, and more...

Please assist a Veteran to attend.

Event chairs: Julie Malcolm & Connie Turner, Spearfish American Legion Auxiliary Unit 164

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov 7—BHSU Hero Appreciation Game—Lyle Hare Stadium—Spearfish—1:00 pm (MT)
 Nov 11—SSG Jason W. Montefering and SGT Jeremiah Boehmer Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Parkston High School Auditorium—9:00 am (CT)
 Nov 11—State Offices are closed
 Nov 13—VABHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs VAMC—10:00 am (MT)
 Nov 13—Virtual Legal Clinic—9:00 am—5:00 pm (CT)
 Nov 26-27—State Offices are closed
 Dec 1—Governor's State of the Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)
 Dec 2—SDDVA Virtual Mini Conference
 Dec 14—Wreath Laying Ceremony—Capital Lake Flaming Fountain—Pierre—11:00 am (CT)
 Dec 24-25—State Offices are closed
 Jan 12—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)
 Jan 13—SDDVA/SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception



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